

Published: Sept. 28, 2014, *Kokomo Tribune* [Page: A5]

http://www.kokomotribune.com/opinion/editorials/article_bbc16c16-4674-11e4-8c14-e3287e5e6282.html

Editorial: Peru Police Department needs a fix

When Kokomo Tribune reporter Carson Gerber filed his May 20, 2013 story on Jonie Kennedy's appointment to Peru police chief, the headline was taken from a quote in the story: "We're all in it together." Recent events couldn't have proven this statement less true.

After only a year into her tenure, Kennedy faced public backlash from a half-dozen ranking officers who asked and received permission from the Peru Board of Works May 1 to resign their ranks over Kennedy's management. Two weeks later, on May 15, Kennedy submitted a request to the board to review the department's policies.

It all came to a head Sept. 10 when Kennedy offered her resignation to Peru Mayor Jim Walker.

"Since the beginning of my administration as Chief of Police, it has been readily apparent that there are a group of individual officers who vehemently opposed my appointment," she wrote.

In response, the Miami County Fraternal Order of Police said Wednesday it was "unaware of any campaign to have Chief Kennedy removed."

This didn't happen in a vacuum. Kennedy only had been promoted from her previous position as assistant chief after Chief Steve Hoover's resignation April 15, 2013. And before Hoover's turn at the helm, Mayor Jim Walker's first choice as chief, Bill Raber, had asked to be returned to patrolman.

Clearly, something is amiss in the Peru Police Department. What is staggering to us is how little has been done to correct what is clearly a systemic problem. In Walker's Sept. 16 statement to the press announcing Kennedy's departure, he called the campaign against Kennedy "mean spirited," but said no officers would face disciplinary action.

"Yes, they will see this chief resign," he said. "But by employing the tactics they used in their quest, they lost a part of their integrity as well. But more importantly, they lost a friend in Jonie Kennedy."

So? Obviously, friendship is the least of their concerns. In a letter we published Thursday, Peru City Councilman Gabriel Greer urged Walker to appoint a replacement from within the department. To his credit, Walker has seen the error in the councilman's request.

"It has been made very clear to me that if anyone from within the Peru Police Department receives a promotion to the chief's position, they will not be supported by certain members of this department," the mayor said Sept. 16.

That's nice, but it's hard to believe anything will change when not a single officer's wrist was even threatened with the semblance of a slap.